

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this Department.]

THE PLACE OF THE GRADUATE SPECIAL IN THE HOSPITAL

DEAR EDITOR: In discussing the place of a special nurse in the hospital one must bear in mind that there are two sides to every question. It seems evident that as a rule superintendents of hospitals view this matter of having to call in so many outside specials somewhat in the nature of a problem, and one that presents no immediate solution. Many would gladly enlarge their training staff in order to use their own nurses in special work, thus eliminating the graduate. This method would not, however, give the desired relief, for to all pay-patient hospitals come those who insist upon bringing their family nurse, the doctors who wish to place their own nurses with certain patients, and the discerning public who do not mind the additional expense for experience. True, we do not forget that a nurse in training may take better care of a patient than her more experienced sister, but we find that patients are often willing to pay the maximum price. Whether they receive a service equivalent is another story. It seems, then, that the graduate special will continue to be a necessity in most general hospitals, and we are told that the making of ourselves a problem or a pleasure remains largely with ourselves.

Much might be said from the nurses' standpoint of the limited accommodations provided for their comfort; in many cases no dressing or bath room, no quiet nook to rest in for a minute, no one in particular assuming the pilotage of the stranger, her knowledge of rules being gained by mistakes made. While this may be true of hospitals, it is also true in other fields of nursing, and in order that we may not prove an added burden to the already overworked management, we might remedy a few of our mistakes and accept as gracefully as possible conditions as they exist, not attempting in this particular field, as we may be warranted in doing in others, a renovation or reconstruction. In talking over the matter with a number of managers, one hears many and varied complaints of the graduate special. A few may be mentioned here to show just cause for some of them. One nurse, who finds herself a little behind in up-to-date methods, is, without invitation or permis-

sion, on hand at any interesting operation or case that may be going on in any part of the house; another, without the formality of request, uses the telephone for long social visits. One manager says that some specials seem to spend little time in their patients' rooms, most of it being employed in walking in the hallways and chatting in a stage whisper to any who will listen; another nurse loses favor with the housekeeper by demanding for her patient delicacies out of season and reason. This, of course, cannot apply to the hospital owned and operated by one physician, who, collecting a large fee for treatment, can afford to cater to capricious appetites, but to the general hospital. Another on entering the hospital feels a sort of irresponsibility, and leaves many of the important matters of care to those appointed to take her place when off duty. A few, forgetting their training days and having become accustomed to the freedom of home, find it hard to become again a unit in the general working of the institution, and come late to meals and in other ways upset order. There is also the supercilious nurse, who does not feel the necessity of common courtesy to house officers. This nurse is dictatorial to pupil nurses, orderlies, and maids. Then there are those whose patients leave the hospital dissatisfied with everything and everybody but their dear nurse, without whom they would surely have died in such miserable surroundings, and many others whose faults of omission and commission remain a cause of worry to many superintendents.

Opposed to all these, I am told of the exceptional class who by their patience, charm, gentle manners, good breeding, and judgment have won for themselves permanent places in the hearts of these troubled managers. They strike the happy medium in all things, their influence in the training-school is for good, their recital of unusual or trying experiences, of travel or nursing in foreign lands, is an inspiration to younger nurses, and makes them more contented with the little trials in these first years of work. Nurses who readily adapt themselves to existing circumstances are always welcomed in the hospitals as elsewhere.

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WHAT IS A FAIR RATE OF CHARGE?

DEAR EDITOR: One of my classmates came to assist me while I was nursing my nephew with typhoid. After four days she left because she was ill. She charged four dollars a day for four days, and one dollar for laundry. She had not been well before she came, and was ill six